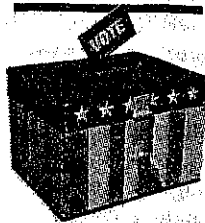


Sullivan's Virtual Vote On Nursing Home

By PETER JAMISON
Valley News Staff Writer

When Sullivan County residents go to the polls to elect two commissioners on Nov. 7, they will be casting their votes in a de facto referendum on management policy for the county's public nursing home.

Genesis HealthCare, a private, for-profit company based in Pennsylvania, manages the home under a contract with the county. Whether



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to continue that contract has been a subject of dispute among lawmakers and county officials. But the day-to-day administration of the county budget, and with it the power to keep Genesis on the payroll, rests with the three-member county commission.

This year, two of the three seats are up for election. Each race features a Republican who strongly supports continuing the Genesis contract and a Democrat who thinks the health-care company needs to go. Voters are thus in a position to define the majority bloc that will decide the nursing home's future.

Commissioner Ben Nelson, whose seat is not up for election, has supported continuing the Genesis contract. He and incumbent Republican Donald Clarke have voted to keep the consultants in the county's employ, over protests from incumbent Democrat Ethel Jarvis, who says she favors returning control of the nursing home to the public sector. Jarvis said she is rooting for fellow Democrat Jeff Barrette, who is running for the seat held by Clarke.

"It would be nice to be in the majority for a change,"

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Sullivan Commissioners' Election Plays as a Referendum on Nursing Home's Management

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Jarvis said.

Jarvis is herself facing competition from Robert Beaudry of Charlestown, a businessman who was part of a committee that recommended hiring private consultants for the nursing home in 2000. That suggestion eventually led to the county's relationship with Genesis. Beaudry's fears that the county might step back from the Genesis contract spurred his bid for office.

"The reason I'm running is that I don't want to go back to losing the amount of money that we were," he said.

County Manager Ed Gil de Rubio said that in two years, Genesis has taken the 156-bed nursing home from an operating deficit of \$2 million to a \$43,000 surplus. Consultants from the company have done so by increasing the number of residents from 118 to 153, including a greater number of Medicare and private-pay customers, Gil de Rubio said. Medicare, a federal health-care program for senior citizens, offers a higher reimbursement rate to the nursing home for its services than does Medicaid, a government program serving the poor.

The new residents have come to the nursing home because of an aggressive campaign to advertise the facility in the Upper Valley, and because of a new emphasis on providing the higher-priced "skilled care" needed by older

Medicare patients, Gil de Rubio said. He dismissed the idea that the changes could have been accomplished without the consulting company's help.

"This was the makings of Genesis," Gil de Rubio said.

But change has come at a price. The county initially agreed to pay Genesis a flat fee of \$200,000 per year for its services. For the coming year, Genesis will receive 4 percent of nursing home revenue as compensation, capped at \$450,000.

Jarvis said Genesis is "too expensive for the benefit we're getting."

Barrette, a 32-year-old carpenter who grew up in Claremont, said the county has learned from Genesis but should seek to wean itself from dependency on the company.

"You don't just turn the faucet off, because I think the transition would be terrible," Barrette said. "But we also are not so deep in it that we can't transition back."

Jarvis is not the only elected official to look askance at the county's partnership with Genesis. In June, the Sullivan County delegation, made up of members of the state legislature representing parts of the county, voted 7-6 to slash funds from the budget dedicated to paying the consultants' bills. The change would have cut short Genesis' contract, but commissioners voted — over Jarvis' opposition — to restore money for Genesis by drawing from other parts of the budget.

Clarke, whose father was a county commissioner, said he envisions the county gradually gaining independence from Genesis. The timeline? Less than 10 years, and probably less than five, he said. But Clarke isn't in a rush to ditch the Genesis contract merely for the sake of abolishing private-public collaboration. He said, "If you could hire someone and you could say they brought you three dollars for every dollar you paid them, how long would you do that? That's the situation we have."

Underlying that situation, whatever its particulars, is a philosophical con-

flict. "We've always had a public institution, and now we're being run by a private corporation, for profit," Jarvis said. Clarke cast the debate as one between opposing views of how government and private enterprise can interact. He said critics of the Genesis arrangement "talk as if profit were a dirty word. As you can imagine, someone from the Democratic Party and someone from the Republican Party might have a different view on those issues."

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DONALD CLARKE

REPUBLICAN

Age: 72

Education: University of New Hampshire, B.S. in Agricultural Engineering

Town of residence: Claremont

Profession: President of Shugah Vale Inc., a family-owned corporation that operated a large farm on the eastern side of Claremont for 40 years; member of Farm Credit Board of Directors for nine years at local level and seven years at regional level (New England, New York and New Jersey); five years as chairman of board

Political experience: Sullivan County commissioner, 2001 to present; Claremont School Board, seven years; Claremont Planning Board, 19— years;



Claremont and Sullivan County economic development groups, 10 years

Candidate's statement: As I have stated many times, I am proud of the positive changes that have taken place during the last six years that I have had a leadership role in. I am sure that if I am not re-elected, some of those initiatives will be reversed. Therefore I am asking for your support on Nov. 7.

For more information: (603) 542-5277 or doncl@adelphia.net

ETHEL JARVIS

DEMOCRAT

Age: 74

Education: Bachelor of Education from Keene State College

Town of residence: Unity

Profession: Retired educator

Political experience: Sullivan County commissioner, 1993-1995 and 2005-present



Candidate's statement: I am running for Sullivan County Commissioner for another term. I will work on two projects, assisted care living and the Department of Corrections. I will continue pushing for open county government, fiscal responsibility and real reduction of taxes. I would appreciate your vote on Nov. 7.

For more information: jandearvis@cyberportal.net; (603) 863-2603

ROBERT BEAUDRY**REPUBLICAN****Age:** 52**Education:** Graduate, Fall Mountain Regional High School**Town of residence:** Charlestown**Profession:** Co-owner, Beaudry Enterprises, a construction, agricultural-supply, and trucking business**Political experience:** Selectman, Town of Charlestown, three years; Charlestown Finance Committee, eight years, four as chairman; Charlestown Planning Board, two years; Charlestown Solid Waste Committee, six years; Fall Mountain Regional High School Budget Committee, four years, two as chairman; in 2000, appointed to study committee for county expenses**Candidate's statement:** No statement received from candidate**For more information:** (603) 826-4270**JEFF BARRETTE****DEMOCRAT****Age:** 32**Education:** Various business classes from New Hampshire Technical College, Nashua, no degree; Graduate, Stevens High School, Claremont**Town of residence:** Claremont**Profession:** Builder/general contractor (business owner)**Political experience:** Vice Chairman of the Claremont Historical District Commission, 2005 to present**Candidate's statement:** I am running for the position of Sullivan County commissioner because I feel that I have a lot to offer the citizens of this county. I am open-minded with a positive attitude and I am able to creatively solve problems. My common-sense approach to most issues allows me to find equitable solutions. My phone number is 542-3985 for anyone who would like to discuss the issues facing the county.**For more information:** (603) 542-3985